



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Committee on Children

February 5, 2015

**Commissioner Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA
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House Bill 5653 - An Act Concerning Chemicals of High Concern For Children

The Department of Public Health (DPH) provides the following information regarding HB 5653.

The DPH believes that children's exposure to some chemicals from consumer products represents a potential public health risk that could be reduced by proactive evaluation of such chemicals and the products that contain them. Regulation of such exposure should come at the federal level since these products are sold nationwide. However, the Environmental Protection Agency program that covers this area (the Toxic Substances and Control Act – TSCA) is out of date and is generally viewed as ineffective. There are efforts at the national level to revise TSCA, but progress in this area has been slow.

Several states have been active in identifying chemicals of concern in children's products through the creation of lists, and, in some cases, requiring manufacturers to report which products contain such chemicals. It is important for Connecticut to remain aware of these efforts, as well as efforts to better manage chemicals in the marketplace by federal agencies in the US, Canada, and Europe. The department has already initiated a limited effort to do so. HB 5653 would mandate that the DPH continue to track state, national, and international efforts, and develop its own means by which to identify the priority chemicals and products to protect children in Connecticut. In meeting the listing and reporting requirements of this bill, the agency would indicate how activities in Connecticut could best complement and build upon developments elsewhere.

Connecticut has taken a leadership role in phasing out certain high concern chemicals from consumer products that children contact (e.g., phthalates in children's toys, bisphenol-A in baby bottles, arsenic in playscapes and other outdoor wood structures). This legislation would enable the DPH to formally identify and report to the legislature about new chemicals of high concern.

Subsection (e) states that the department may "require" in-state manufacturers to consult with an interstate clearinghouse or an in-state institute of higher education if they make a product that contains priority chemicals listed by DPH. Such manufacturers would have to seek consultation regarding an assessment of the feasibility of replacing such chemicals with safer alternatives. Implementation of this provision would require resources that are not currently available within the DPH to enable the department to establish and enforce corresponding regulations. Therefore, should the bill move forward with the language contained in subsection (e), the agency cannot support it due to the anticipated fiscal impact.

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In general, however, HB 5653 defines a proper role for the DPH (analysis, listing, reporting, and defining options). Therefore, the department supports in large measure the proposed language in this bill and believes that it provides a logical and systematic way for Connecticut to develop scientifically sound policy regarding chemicals of high concern to children.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.